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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: FEMALE MUNICIPALITY CANDIDATE SAYS WIN OR
LOSE, CAMPAIGNING A GOOD LEARNING EXPERIENCE

REF: A) Kuwait 495
B) Kuwait 475
C) Kuwait 85

Sensitive but unclassified; not for internet distribution.

1. (U) On March 5, PolChief and PolAsst met with Engineer Jenan Ramadan Bushihri, a candidate for the upcoming special Municipal Council election and the first Kuwaiti woman to actually run for public office (ref A). Bushihri, a married 32-year-old mother of two, is currently the Director of the Food Laboratory Department at the Municipal Council. She has worked at the Municipal Council since 1996 when she graduated from Kuwait University's Engineering Faculty. She earned a master's degree in chemical engineering and pollution from Kuwait University in 2000 and is currently working on her PhD from Ain Shams University in Cairo.

2. (SBU) Bushihri told EmbOffs she was considering running in the 2009 Municipal Council elections, but when a seat on the 16-member council became available, she was encouraged to run for office by family, friends, and especially her uncle Jawad Bushihri, a prominent businessman, who is financing her campaign. (Note: Special elections are necessary to fill the Council seat vacated when Councilmember Abdullah Al-Muhailbi was appointed as Minister of Municipal Affairs (Ref B). End Note.)

3. (SBU) In contrast to aggressive campaigning for the 2007 parliamentary elections by activist Dr. Rola Dashti and journalist Aisha Al-Reshaid, Bushihri believes a non-confrontational campaign based on the issues and her abilities will resonate more among the 28,000 voters in her district. (Note: There are 10 Municipal Council districts versus the current 25 for Parliament. End note.) She does not believe Kuwait is ready for women to break tradition by visiting men's diwanis, but said she would reach this audience through her husband, father, and brothers, as well as through video teleconferences. She was optimistic that by the 2009 Municipal Council elections, most diwanis would be mixed and a woman's presence would not be unusual.

3. (U) Bushihri said that being elected to the Municipal Council is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to bettering Kuwait. Her campaign objectives are to lessen traffic congestion and reduce the pollution that emanates from Kuwait's oil refineries. Another goal is her own political education; commenting that she was still young, she said that running for office would be a good learning experience even if she is not elected.

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